THE Hollywood REPORTER
BERLIN DAILY №6
FEBRUARY 11, 2014
THR.COM/BERLIN

WAGNER MOURA CLEMENS SCHICK JESUITA BARBOSA

PRAIA do FUTURO

A FILM BY KARIM AÏNOUZ

64. Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin Competition

SCREENING SCHEDULE:
TUE 11 FEB / 12:00 / BERLINALE PALAST / PRESS SCREENING
TUE 11 FEB / 19:00 / BERLINALE PALAST / WORLD PREMIERE
WED 12 FEB / 9:00 / HAUS DER BERLINER FESTSPIELE / PUBLIC SCREENING
WED 12 FEB / 18:00 / FRIEDRICHSTADTPALAST / PUBLIC SCREENING
WED 12 FEB / 22:30 / INTERNATIONAL / PUBLIC SCREENING
SUN 16 FEB / 12.30 / BERLINALE PALAST / PUBLIC SCREENING

WORLD SALES:
THE MATCH FACTORY
MARTIN-GROPIUS-BAU, BOOTH #33
T: +49 30 863 950 437

PETROBRAS, SABESP presents "PRAIA DO FUTURO" a production CORAÇÃO DA SELVA, HANK LEVINE FILM, DETAILFILM, WATCHMEN PRODUCTIONS with coproduction of HBO LATIN AMERICA ORIGINALS screenplay by FELIPE BRAGANÇA, KARIM AÏNOUZ director of photography ALI OLCAY GÖZCAYA production designer MARCOS PEDROSO costumes by CAMILA SOARES make up MILENA PFLEIDEREHKA casting coach FÁTIMA TOLEDO editor ISABELA MONTEIRO DE CASTRO sound designer WALDIR XAVIER mixing MATTHIAS SCHWAB music HAUSCHKA casting ARMANDO PRAÇA, UWE & ANJE BUNKER delegate producer DORISSA BERNINGER produced by GEÓRGIA COSTA ARAÚJO, HANK LEVINE coproduced by FABIAN GASMIA, HENNING KAMM, CHRISTOPHER ZITTERBART executive producers ANDRO STEINBORN, LUCIANO PATRICK directed by KARIM AÏNOUZ

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With the support of
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64 Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin
Competition

He wanted to find the murderer,
but he uncovered his own heart.

a film by **Diao Yinan**

BLACK COAL, THIN ICE

白日焰火

FORTISSIMOFILMS
BERLIN OFFICE **MGB 2**

World Premiere
Wed, 12-FEB 10:00 PM
Berlinale Palast

Thu, 13-FEB	**9:30 AM**	**Friedrichstadt-palast**	**Festival**
Thu, 13-FEB	**6:00 PM**	**Friedrichstadt-palast**	**Festival**

starring **Liao Fan Gwei Lun Mei Wang Xuebing**

幸福蓝海影视文化集团股份有限公司 Omnijoi Media Corporation Co., Ltd. Boneyard Entertainment China(BEC) Limited(HongKong) 中国电影股份有限公司 China Film Co., Ltd. 江苏幸福蓝海影业有限责任公司 Jiangsu Omnijoi Movie Co., Ltd. FORTISSIMOFILMS

producer Vivian QU WAN Juan co-producer SHEN Yang ZHANG Dajun director of photography DONG Jinsong art director LIU Qiang editor YANG Hongyu sound ZHANG Yang composer WEN Zi co-starring WANG Jingchun YU Ailei NI Jingyang executive producer BU Yu Daniel Jonathan VICTOR HAN Sanping HONG Tao HAN Xiaoli

海报设计：北京远山文化传播有限公司

FEBRUARY 11, 2014
THR.COM/BERLIN | BERLIN | №6

The Hollywood Reporter

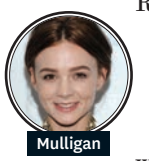
BERLIN WEATHER AND HIGH TEMPS
TODAY 44° F 7° C | TOMORROW 44° F 7° C

CONCORDE VOTES FOR MULLIGAN

By Scott Roxborough and Georg Szalai

German distributor Concorde has acquired *Suffragette*, the upcoming period drama starring **Carey Mulligan** and **Helena Bonham Carter** about the early women's movement to gain voting rights, from Pathe.

Sarah Gavron (*Brick Lane*) is directing the project, which Ruby Films is producing with backing from Film4, the British Film Institute and Pathe, with Pathe also handling international sales and distributing the project in the U.K. and France.


Mulligan

Mulligan stars as a young footsoldier of the early feminist movement who is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

King's *Cell* Goes to Japan

By Pamela McClintock

The **Stephen King** adaptation *Cell* continues to ring up strong business for International Film Trust, which has sealed a deal for Japan.

John Cusack, **Samuel L. Jackson**, **Isabelle Fuhrman** and **Stacy Keach** star in the thriller, about a father who goes searching for his young son and wife after a mysterious cell phone signal broadcast over a global network turns people into mindless savages. Along the way, he bands together with others looking for their friends and relatives.

The movie reunites Cusack

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

China's Richest Man Eyes Hollywood

The $40 million 3D tentpole *Kong*, based on the legend of the Monkey King, is the first title from Robin Li's newly formed Aquamen Entertaiment *By Pamela McClintock and Clifford Coonan*

A collective run by Internet mogul **Li Yanhong**, known in English as **Robin Li** — China's richest man — is backing a new film production venture that will be run by Korean filmmaker **Jeongjung Kim** and Chinese producer **Gary Zhang**.

The first title from Aquamen Entertainment is the 3D CGI tentpole *Kong*, based on the famous Chinese Monkey King legend and intended to be one of the largest Asian animated projects ever mounted. *Kong* will be developed in association with a Korean animation studio, although Kim and Zhang intend to hire a Hollywood director.

Kim, director of *Oishii Man*, won a best picture for Korean Cinema award for his movie *Hers* at the 2007 Jeonju International Film Festival.

Aquamen will be based in Los Angeles.

Kong, budgeted at $40 million, is the latest movie or television property to be adapted from the classical Chinese novel *Journey to the West*. The film will tell the origin story of the Monkey King, who was born from molten rock in the Earth's core, but also will feature sci-fi elements, including aliens and robots.

Li is president of the Chinese Cultural Chamber of Commerce of the Private Sector, a collective of hundreds of Asian companies with total assets of more than $1 trillion. It is the first national organization in the cultural sector approved by China's Ministry of State and was formed last year with a view toward developing investments in news media, broadcasting and television, cultural projects and Internet and software services. Zhang serves as the collective's vice chairman.

Li is first and foremost known as the chairman of Baidu, China's largest Internet search engine. Late last year, he surpassed **Wang Jianlin**, chairman of the Dalian Wanda Group, to become China's richest man, with a reported net worth of $12.2 billion.

Aquamen marks Li's first foray into the film business. With *Kong*, the new production venture is looking to energize the Asian animation business.

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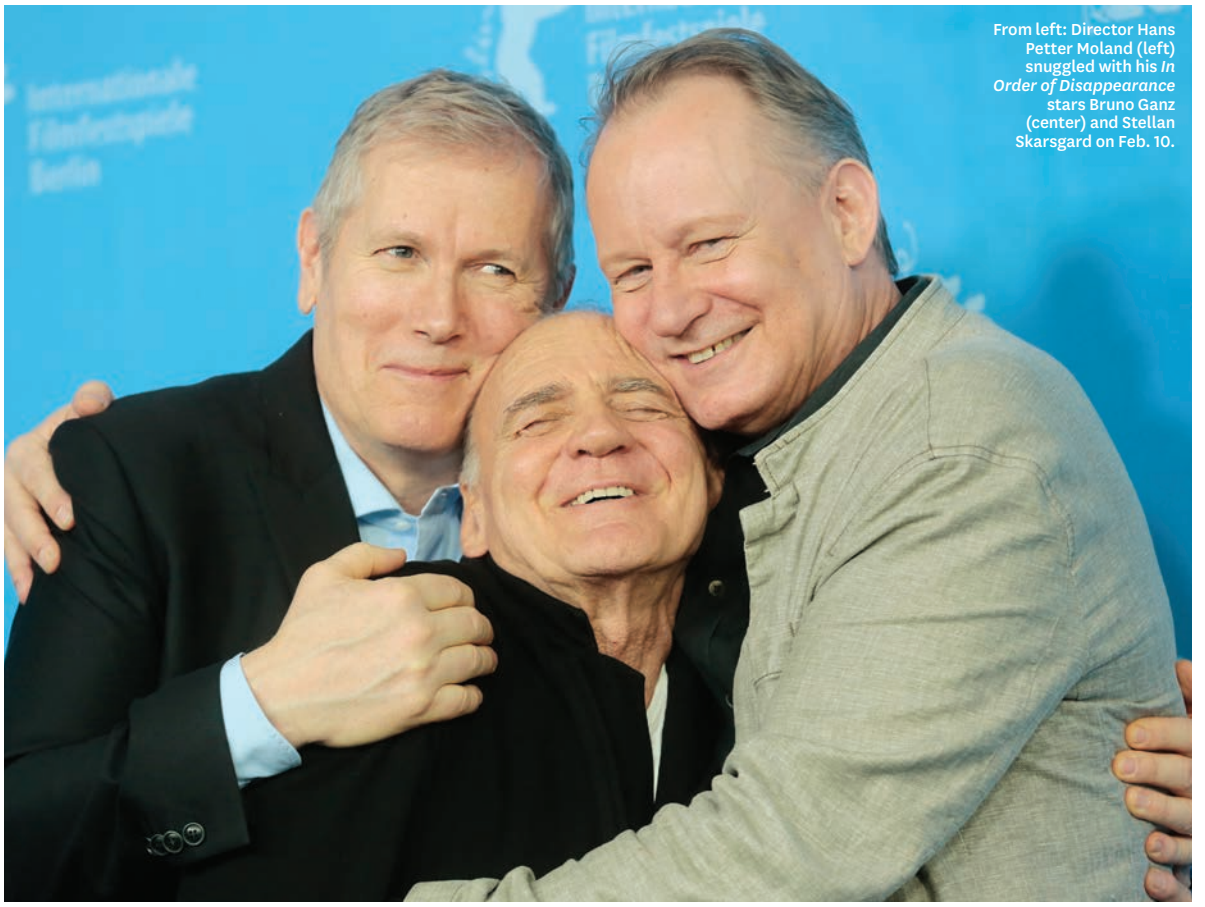

From left: Director Hans Petter Moland (left) snuggled with his *In Order of Disappearance* stars Bruno Ganz (center) and Stellan Skarsgard on Feb. 10.

THR HEAT INDEX

WIM WENDERS
The German art house icon's 3D documentary project *Cathedrals of Culture*, which has its world premiere here Feb. 12, sells to TV networks in Austria, Japan, Norway and Sweden.

DIETER KOSSLICK
Despite grumbling from festgoers about the weakness of this year's competition lineup, the Berlinale director has been mentioned as a possible replacement for Berlin's culture secretary, who resigned after a tax-evasion scandal.

BRENDAN GLEESON
The Irish actor's *Calvary* continues to gather accolades. After a well-received turn at Sundance, the film's sold-out Berlinale screening met with massive applause on Monday.

KNOW YOUR DEALMAKER

Nadine de Barros
Fortitude International
The foreign sales agent recently launched L.A.-based Fortitude with two partners. Debuting at EFM, the firm has sold a raft of territories for *The End of the Tour*, starring **Jason Segel** and **Jesse Eisenberg**, to Sony Pictures Worldwide Acquisitions. Segel plays *Infinite Jest* author **David Foster Wallace**, who committed suicide during a book tour.

German Director Battles Genre Curse

With his dark, *Fight Club*-like Berlinale entry, *Stereo*, Maximilian Erlenwein attempts to reverse local audiences' aversion to homemade thrillers *By Scott Roxborough*

Genre cinema — horror, thrillers and sci-fi movies — never have been Germany's strength, at least not since the days of **Fritz Lang**. But with *Stereo*, the Panorama Special entry starring **Juergen Vogel** and **Moritz Bleibtreu**, two of the country's biggest box-office draws, director **Maximilian Erlenwein** hopes to change that.

"Germany doesn't have a great genre tradition — it's just starting to build up now," Erlenwein tells *THR*. "The German audience still has to get used to the idea that there can be good genre cinema [here]."

The plot of *Stereo* has Vogel playing Erik, a tattooed motorcycle repairman with a dark past who seems to have his life together and is planning to settle down with his girlfriend and her child until the mysterious Henry (Bleibtreu) comes knocking and refuses to go away.

The film, slick and stylish, has echoes of *Fight Club* and similarly dark psychological undertones. So it comes as a surprise that the director says he took inspiration from *Harvey*, the 1950 classic starring **James Stewart** as a man who talks to an imaginary rabbit. "[*Harvey*] is definitely not a thriller," says Erlenwein, "but when I was watching the film I thought: What if the rabbit wasn't so nice? What if he was a real jerk? That's how it got started."

Stereo has gotten strong reviews, especially in Germany, but the picture could face an uphill battle at the box office. While German comedy, art house drama and children's movies do well here, homemade genre films often are box office poison. Erlenwein's debut, *Gravity* (2009), a heist movie also starring Vogel, made just $340,000 in general release.

Stereo's Bleibtreu (left) and Vogel

"It's difficult, definitely, because the thriller genre, in Germany, is so dominated by American movies, which have huge budgets," says star Vogel. "If we do genre film in Germany, our stories have to be so much stronger because we don't have the production budget to cover up the holes in the story."

Wild Bunch, which is bowing *Stereo* wide in Germany this May, is hoping Bleibtreu and Vogel's star power — as well as Erlenwein's story — will be enough to overcome local audiences' distrust of locally made genre fare.

But following neighboring European countries such as France and Denmark — which have built up strong genre film industries in their territories — German directors increasingly are pushing into the niche. Local superstar **Til Schweiger** gave the action cop flick a German twist with his last film, *The Guardians*. And **Axel Stein**, best-known here as a sitcom actor, has made his directorial debut with *Tape_13*, the first-ever German found-footage horror film, which had its premiere in the Berlinale's Perspective Deutsches Kino section. THR

In *The Forger*, John Travolta (far right) stars as a onetime art prodigy and second-generation thief who buys his way out of prison in order to spend time with his sick son, played by Tye Sheridan (center). The hitch: He and his father, played by Christopher Plummer, must pull off one last job.

Exclusive First Look

Drafthouse Grabs Nick Cave's *Days*

By Rebecca Ford

Drafthouse Films has acquired North American rights to docufiction film *20,000 Days on Earth*, starring **Nick Cave**, from Hanway Films.

Iain Forsyth and **Jane Pollard**'s directorial debut premiered in January at Sundance, where it won the best directing and best editing awards in the World Cinema Documentary category. The pic had its European premiere here Feb. 10.

The film distribution arm of the Alamo Drafthouse Cinema is planning a theatrical release for the film this year.

Set to an original score by Cave and **Warren Ellis**, *20,000 Days on Earth* takes an intimate look at the artistic process by following a day in Cave's life.

Cave

A Pulse Films/JW Films production, *20,000 Days* was produced by **James Wilson** and **Dan Bowen** with the support of Film4, Corniche Pictures & the BFI. THR

Anderson's *Punk* Rocks U.K. Deal

By Stuart Kemp

Sini Anderson's documentary *The Punk Singer*, about legendary musician **Kathleen Hanna**, will rock and roll into British cinemas after inking a deal with Dogwoof.

The doc examines the feminist icon who fronted the influential bands Bikini Kill and Le Tigre. She also was instrumental in the launch of the '90s riot grrrl movement.

The deal was brokered by Dogwoof head of distribution **Oli Harbottle** with Autlook Films managing director **Salma Abdalla** on behalf of international sales agent Films Transit. THR

CLOSE-UP

LADIES FIRST! GENDER IN FILM EXAMINED

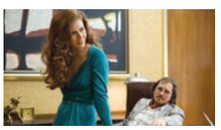
IN ORDER TO PASS THE BECHDEL TEST, A FEMINIST MOVIE RATING embraced by Swedish cinemas, a film must have (1) at least two named female characters, (2) who talk to each other, (3) about something besides a man. The test "doesn't say if a film is good or not. It's a tool to work with and the goal is to make women visible," says Helene Granqvist, co-chairperson of Women in Film and Television. *THR*'s crack team of reviewers put films showing at the Berlinale through their paces.

52 TUESDAYS Directed by Sophie Hyde *(Generation)*

AT LEAST TWO NAMED FEMALE CHARACTERS	WHO TALK TO EACH OTHER	ABOUT SOMETHING BESIDES A MAN
✔	✔	✔

→ **BOTTOM LINE** A film about a lesbian mother and her daughter had better pass, even if the mom is becoming a man.

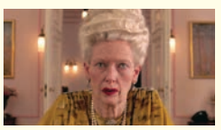
AMERICAN HUSTLE Directed by David O. Russell *(special screening)*



AT LEAST TWO NAMED FEMALE CHARACTERS	WHO TALK TO EACH OTHER	ABOUT SOMETHING BESIDES A MAN
✔	✔	✔

→ **BOTTOM LINE** A chat about nail polish gets this one through, but it's a close call.

THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL Directed by Wes Anderson *(in competition)*



AT LEAST TWO NAMED FEMALE CHARACTERS	WHO TALK TO EACH OTHER	ABOUT SOMETHING BESIDES A MAN
✔	✘	✘

→ **BOTTOM LINE** Though the women have names, one is a maid (hello, pink ghetto) and the lead female is dead.

THE MIDNIGHT AFTER Directed by Fruit Chan *(Panorama Special)*

AT LEAST TWO NAMED FEMALE CHARACTERS	WHO TALK TO EACH OTHER	ABOUT SOMETHING BESIDES A MAN
✔	✔	✔

→ **BOTTOM LINE** Facing an apocalypse, the female characters have bigger things than boys on their mind.

THE MONUMENTS MEN Directed by George Clooney *(special screening)*

AT LEAST TWO NAMED FEMALE CHARACTERS	WHO TALK TO EACH OTHER	ABOUT SOMETHING BESIDES A MAN
✔	✔	✘

→ **BOTTOM LINE** Two women speak — but it's about a man (though they do spit in his glass).

NYMPHOMANIAC, VOL. 1 Directed by Lars von Trier *(special screening)*

AT LEAST TWO NAMED FEMALE CHARACTERS	WHO TALK TO EACH OTHER	ABOUT SOMETHING BESIDES A MAN
✔	✔	✔

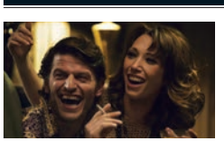
→ **BOTTOM LINE** Von Trier passes a feminist test (!), squeaking by thanks to a fight between a mother and daughter.

TWO MEN IN TOWN Directed by Rachid Bouchareb *(in competition)*

AT LEAST TWO NAMED FEMALE CHARACTERS	WHO TALK TO EACH OTHER	ABOUT SOMETHING BESIDES A MAN
✔	✘	✘

→ **BOTTOM LINE** Well, it is called two *men* in town, after all …

YVES SAINT LAURENT Directed by Jalil Lespert *(Panorama Special)*



AT LEAST TWO NAMED FEMALE CHARACTERS	WHO TALK TO EACH OTHER	ABOUT SOMETHING BESIDES A MAN
✔	✘	✘

→ **BOTTOM LINE** The world of couture caters to women but is dominated by men, just like this film.

Alyokhina (left) and Tolokonnikova

Pussy Riot Mulls Hollywood Offers

By Nick Holdsworth

Pussy Riot members **Nadezhda Tolokonnikova** and **Maria Alyokhina** say they have been receiving offers for a Hollywood film based on their story, but the duo declined to reveal what studios have been pitching them.

The two Russian women flew into Berlin Monday after visiting New York to promote their new prison rights foundation, where they played a gig with **Madonna**. "We have some offers but we cannot say from whom, nothing is agreed," Tolokonnikova said. When pressed, she laughed and added: "It's like *Star Wars*!"

Asked if she meant to suggest **George Lucas** is involved, she said: "Sorry, we have some offers but we cannot say anything at the moment."

Her comments came at a Cinema for Peace press event at Berlin's Regent Hotel, where the two were flanked by **Kweku Mandela**, grandson of the late South African president **Nelson Mandela**, and **Bianca Jagger**, a European Council and Cinema for Peace Goodwill Ambassador.

Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina, who were set to attend a gala screening in Berlin on Monday of **Mike Lerner**'s documentary *Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer*, slammed the lack of respect for human rights in their country, dubbed the amnesty under which they were freed in December "a fake" used by President **Vladimir Putin** to "polish his image," and criticized the antigay laws that have been met with international condemnation.

The two said they had no plans to run for president themselves but that they might seek elected office in Moscow, where they live. THR

China

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Animation has been the ugly stepchild in the Chinese film business for a long time, and previous attempts to make a big animation feature, such as *Through the Moebius Strip* in 2005, have floundered. But growing technical sophistication has seen some animated features do well.

China has a massive pool of animators working at some 8,000 animation studios, and many companies have outsourced projects to China, but the country has struggled to find original scripts that resonate in the world's fastest-growing major film market.

Recent successes include the *Pleasant Goat and Big Big Wolf* franchise, which has been translated into 17 languages and shown in more than 50 countries, and LeTV's *Boonie Bears: To the Rescue*, which has taken in $35.8 million so far at the box office. *Despicable Me 2* has earned north of $52 million and Disney's *Frozen*, which opened in China on Feb. 5, has taken in an estimated $13.7 million so far.

Aquamen intends to announce a director for *Kong* during the Cannes Film Festival in May. THR

The Monkey King

Monkey

MONKEY BUSINESS

The Monkey King is a character from the 16th century *Journey to the West*, one of the four great classical novels of Chinese literature. Among the dozens of TV and film adaptations of the king's story, four have stood out.

The Monkey King
Currently breaking records at the Chinese box office, **Poi Soi Cheang**'s 3D fantasy *The Monkey King* features **Chow Yun-fat**, **Aaron Kwok** and **Donnie Yen** and took in a record $41 million on its opening day.

Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons
Stephen Chow's *Conquering the Demons* was the most popular film in China in 2013, passing the 1 billion yuan threshold ($160 million) in China in just 16 days and ultimately earning $205.9 million. In 1994, Chow was in front of the camera as the simian deity in a pair of films called *A Chinese Odyssey: Pandora's Box* and *A Chinese Odyssey: Cinderella*.

Monkey: Journey to the West
Gorillaz creators **Damon Albarn** and **Jamie Hewlett** did a musical retelling of the story, directed by **Chen Shi-zheng**, which played at Lincoln Center in 2013.

Monkey
A Japanese TV drama based on the novel and filmed in northwest China and Inner Mongolia, the show was produced by Nippon Television and International Television Films in association with NHK and broadcast from 1978 to 1980 on Nippon TV. It became a cult classic in the U.K. in the 1980s when dubbed into English and its star, **Masaaki Sakai**, is now beloved there. THR

Concorde

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

radicalized and turns to violence after seeing peaceful protests achieve nothing.

Concorde has had a busy European Film Market. In addition to *Suffragette*, which managing director **Markus Zimmer** says has "major crossover potential," the Munich-based distributor also has picked up **Michael Winterbottom**'s *The Face of an Angel*, starring **Kate Beckinsale** and **Daniel Bruhl**, and **Stephen Herek**'s *The Great Gilly Hopkins*, both from WestEnd Films. *Face of an Angel* is inspired by the **Amanda Knox** trial. It focuses on a filmmaker (Bruhl) who visits Italy in the aftermath of a big murder case.

Face of an Angel is a fictionalized adaptation of **Barbie Latza Nadeau**'s book about the Knox murder trial, *Angel Face: Sex, Murder and the Inside Story of Amanda Knox*.

The Great Gilly Hopkins, an adaptation of a young-adult novel about a 12-year old who moves from foster home to foster home, stars **Glenn Close**, **Kathy Bates**, **Danny Glover** and **Octavia Spencer**. THR

Cell

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and Jackson for the second time in a King adaptation after 2007's *1408*.

IFT president **Christian de Gallegos** has sold the film to Presidio in Japan, which can be a prime market for genre fare. Benaroya Pictures and The Genre Company produced *Cell*. Gallegos already has sold *Cell* in numerous other markets, including much of Europe and in China.

Tod "Kip" Williams currently is shooting *Cell* from a script by King, with revisions by **Adam Alleca** and **Mark Leyner**. King's apocalyptic horror novel was published in 2006.

Presidio will open *Cell* on more than 50 screens, a relatively wide release for Japan.

Richard Saperstein is producing *Cell* alongside **Michael Benaroya**, **Brian Witten** and **Shara Kay**, with Cusack as executive producer. During his tenure as president of Dimension Films, Saperstein oversaw the film adaptations of King's *The Mist*, as well as *1408*. THR

BERLINALE BRIEFS

JUST TEMPTATION LAUNCHES MUSIC FUND

Berlin-based financing group Just Temptation is looking to fill a perceived gap in the market with a new film fund that provides private equity funding for the production and marketing of soundtracks for European films. "We estimate a film's soundtrack can account from 20 percent to up to 50 percent of its financial potential, but typically it accounts for just 1 percent of a film's budget," said company director **Vincent Favrat**. The company has built up a network of partner composers including Oscar winner **Gabriel Yared** (*The English Patient*) and chart-topping Austrian electronic duo Kruder & Dorfmeister.

RADIUS-TWC TAKES DANISH HORROR FILM

U.S. rights to Danish horror movie *When Animals Dream*, about a 16-year-old girl who finds out she is a werewolf, have gone to Radius-TWC.

DUBAI FILM FEST SETS 2014 DATES

Dubai International Film Festival organizers have set the 11th edition of the event for Dec. 10-17. Last year's edition closed with **David O. Russell**'s *American Hustle*.

SIGNATURE SIGNS OFF ON *SNOW KING*

Snow Queen 2: Snow King, the sequel to $14 million-earning Russian 'toon *Snow Queen*, will get a U.K. theatrical run in February 2015 after selling to Signature Entertainment, which will release the film in 3D.

TORONTO TO LAUNCH GLOBAL SHORTS SHOWCASE

The Toronto International Film Festival unveiled plans for Short Cuts International, a showcase that will launch at this year's edition in September. "As TIFF expands its global reach, we want to bring some of the world's finest short films to the audience, industry and media that gather in Toronto every year," said artistic director **Cameron Bailey** at the Berlinale. THR

64 Internationale Filmfestspiele Berlin
Generation

ABOVE US ALL

Directed by Eugenie Jansen
Produced by De Productie
Sales: New Europe Film Sales

Screenings:
Wednesday Feb 12, 11:30 CinemaxX 3
Sunday Feb 16, 16:30 CinemaxX 3
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CEO, DOLPHIN FILMS

Bill O'Dowd

The Miami-based kids content specialist discusses making a big splash with *Max Steel* and why he won't be competing with Pixar anytime soon

By Scott Roxborough

"There are really only three companies that finance, produce and distribute live-action family entertainment worldwide," says O'Dowd, photographed in his Coral Gables, Florida, office Jan. 31. "It's Disney, Nickelodeon and Dolphin."

IT'S THEIR FIRST TIME AT BERLIN'S European Film Market, but Bill O'Dowd and Dolphin Films already have made a splash with the launch of *Max Steel*, a big-budget teen superhero title based on Mattel's hit action toy. The property — which already has inspired two animated series and several animated TV movies — focuses on a teen named Max with superpowers who partners with Steel, a tech-savvy alien. The feature-film version of *Max Steel* originally had been set up as a studio project with Paramount. But after years of development hell, Mattel took the indie route and signed up with Dolphin, which will fully finance *Max Steel* with Open Road bowing the film wide in the U.S. and Stuart Ford's IM Global handling international sales in Berlin. It's part of Dolphin's multi-year, multipicture domestic distribution deal with Open Road.

The project is the first in a planned *Max Steel* franchise and, Dolphin hopes, the beginning of a slate of Mattel toy-inspired titles akin to Hasbro's slate of *Transformers* and *G.I. Joe* films. Dolphin — already a giant in the world of kids TV with series like Nickelodeon's *Ned's Declassified School Survival Guide* and the Emmy-nominated *Zoe 101* — has laid the groundwork for global domination on the big screen as well.

The Miami-based O'Dowd, 44, spoke to *The Hollywood Reporter* about translating Dolphin's family entertainment success to the big screen, Mattel's global film ambitions and how, after *Twilight* and *The Hunger Games*, to make a boys-focused film franchise appeal to girls.

Max Steel originally was set up with Paramount. How did it end up with Dolphin?

We met with Mattel a little over a year ago. We'd long been crossing paths because of our background in kids entertainment. We'd been exploring a number of different properties with which to launch our film division and *Max Steel* was perfect. We loved this hook of a superhero movie that was also a buddy comedy. Mattel has had properties at different studios over the years; they probably had the idea at the same time as Hasbro to adapt their global toy properties into global tentpoles, but they've been burned in the past by the studios' development process. With our deal with [Open Road CEO] Tom Ortenberg — where we agreed to deliver multiple pictures with a minimum 2,000-screen rollout in the U.S. — they knew we could commit to a domestic release on the right schedule and deliver.

Unlike recent teen franchises — _Twilight_ or _Hunger Games_, say — _Max Steel_ targets boys, not girls. Will it work?

We're very conscious of the female demographic, and we've added a significant love story to the *Max Steel* movie because we want to make girls feel included. The recent success of teen young-adult films or ones with female leads is awesome. But you have to remember for 20 years, it was the boy-led properties that worked. And *Transformers* showed that market is still very strong. But we want to diversify our slate. If we could have five male and five female properties, that would be great.

For a new indie film company, Dolphin is incredibly ambitious, aiming for a global tentpole with its first title.

Well it helps to have a little context. We've been very big in the kids TV business for some time now. It's been 20 years building this overnight success. We've owned and produced much of Nickelodeon's primetime slate over the years. And series like *Zoe 101* are the tentpoles of the kids TV world. They are the drivers of the business worldwide. When we decided to expand into features, we thought about the relationships we had in the kids space that would work in the feature space. That's why Mattel wanted to partner with Dolphin.

And because we are set up differently — we can guarantee U.S. distribution for our films over multiple years and we have partners like Mattel behind us — we can approach the international market differently. *Max Steel* isn't a typical indie film with a couple of hot actors and a great script that comes and goes. This is a tentpole property. And on the international marketplace, missing out on one big film is a shame but missing out on the next big franchise … that's a much bigger shame. The franchises are what drive the business internationally.

What, besides its toy properties, does Mattel bring to the table?

Mattel is a global company. They have 43 offices on the ground in territories around the world. Some 50,000 retail outlets sell Mattel properties. That creates an incredible amplification. Open Road can roll out one of our films in the U.S. and spend, say, $30 million on P&A. Then Mattel can add the same in promotion worldwide. In Germany, say, if you have P&A of $2 million, Mattel's contribution can double or triple the effect. It's very powerful. I mean, we'll have our products in retail. That virtually never happens with indie films. Toy companies are really long-lead planners. They already know what their big push for 2016 is going to be. So we can have those marketing discussions early on. We're talking to Walmart, to companies like Tesco in the U.K. It feels more like a *Harry Potter* than an indie film. All the top Mattel executives are coming to Berlin — for the first time — to show their commitment.

What sort of properties are you looking to do? What will and won't you do?

Our niche is family, teen and tween entertainment. Something like a *Hunger Games* or a *Twilight* is something we can do. But we're not going to do R-rated comedies, horror or a Sundance-style drama. Properties like *Home Alone*, *Percy Jackson* or *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, those are right for us. We may consider an animated movie or two that skews young. But we're not going to try and take on Pixar! THR

PHOTOGRAPHED BY Jeffery Salter

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Berlinale

The Directors

"The worst part [of directing] is you have to pretend you know what you are doing and where you are going when actually you have no idea," says Gondry (far right), photographed with (from left) Schlondorff, Aladag, Stevens, Wenham, Olin and Murdoch on Feb. 8 at Borchardt.

Roundtable

'Shut up, listen and don't shout': Seven helmers discuss first-day jitters, the enduring fantasy of film and learning to control a bad temper

BY SCOTT ROXBOROUGH AND STUART KEMP
PHOTOGRAPHED BY FABRIZIO MALTESE

TUCKED AWAY IN THE WINE CELLAR of the legendary Borchardt restaurant, seven very different filmmakers got together to talk shop. The group included two Oscar winners: Michel Gondry, 50, a member of this year's Berlinale jury who also has the doc *Is the Man Who Is Tall Happy?* in the Panorama Dokumente section; and veteran German director Volker Schlondorff, 74, whose latest, *Diplomatie*, and his 1970 film, *Baal*, are both Special Screenings at the fest.

They mixed it up with novices Stuart Murdoch, 45, Scottish frontman of indie band Belle & Sebastian, whose debut film, *God Help the Girl*, opened Berlin's Generation 14plus section; and Australian actor David Wenham, 48, who directed his first short as part of the omnibus *The Turning*, a Special Screening. Like Wenham, Fisher Stevens, 50, and Austrian Feo Aladag, 42, were actors before turning to directing. Stevens is in Berlin with the activist documentaries *Another World* (a Panorama Dokumente entry) and Culinary Cinema title *Mission Blue*; Aladag's second feature, the Afghanistan war drama *Inbetween Worlds*, is in official competition. Meanwhile, Norwegian director Margreth Olin, 43, who shot one of six documentaries — alongside Wim Wenders and Robert Redford — for the ambitious 3D project *Cathedrals of Culture* (a Berlinale world premiere), knew she wanted to be a director since the age of 8. They sat down with *The Hollywood Reporter* to discuss heartbreak, histrionics and learning to trust your gut.

Aladag

You come from very different backgrounds. Was there one specific moment when you knew you were going to be a director?

STUART MURDOCH I'm not a director. I'm a songwriter and apart from that, I'm a charlatan. I shouldn't be here. That's how I feel.

VOLKER SCHLONDORFF We all are.

MURDOCH Well that's nice to know. I just had an idea that never went away. I had a song that turned into a script that turned into a movie, but I was lucky. Unless I was in a reasonably successful rock band, nobody was going to take a chance on me. That's how I got in.

MICHEL GONDRY I remember a very precise moment when I decided to become a director. I had done a short animated film, paid from my own pocket. It was not very successful. And I was trying to take jobs to make money and survive. I took this job to do artwork. I was not very good at it. And one day I was with a very irritating advertising lady. From 9:30 to 10 she was yapping at my back telling me, "Do this, do that." At 10 o'clock, I put my pen down, I got up and I said, "I don't like the way you talk to me." I left, went home and went back to bed. And I said, "From this moment, I will never take orders from anyone." So after that I had to be a director.

David, you have acted in some very big films — from *The Lord of the Rings* to *300*. How did you feel coming to set as director on the first day of shooting on *The Turning*?

DAVID WENHAM My film is a very little film. It's essentially a two-hander, set in the Australian outback and it is a performance piece. It was thrilling actually. For the last 10 years, I've felt like a director in an actor's body. I love acting, nothing gives me more joy, but when it comes to the stage — and I think a lot of actors feel the same way — they don't concentrate only on their own performance but are aware of so many things around them. I started to become frustrated on many films where I could see people not realizing their potential. In different departments — whether it be performance, whether it be art departments — they just weren't realizing what they could possibly do. So I just thought, if ever I got that opportunity, I would try to empower people to realize the best of their talents. So the first day on set was a thrill to me. My piece purposely concentrates on performance. The camerawork does nothing to distract from drawing the audience in to the story between these two actors.

But wasn't it terrifying?

WENHAM It was in a way, but also I think if you don't have a bit of nervousness and adrenaline, complacency comes in, so I actually think that is a really good thing. Sure there were nerves, but it was good because it puts you on edge all the time; it actually makes you think. And also makes you think laterally, too, when problems may come up — to think of left-of-field solutions, which is good.

Fisher, you also made the transition from acting to directing. Why did you take that jump?

FISHER STEVENS Well, had I worked with these two [*points to Gondry and Schlondorff*] I would have been happy to continue being an actor. I wasn't getting cast always with directors I could listen to. I started out with some great directors and then I'd get directors where I'd say, "Why are you doing it this way?" I was always very nice, but I said to myself: I want to do this. Unless I work with masters ... But I love both: to direct and to act. So guys, I'm available.

> *"I was offered certain parts and they were always 'blond and beautiful' or 'blond and ugly,' 'blond and blah-blah.' "*
>
> ALADAG, on the impetus to move into directing from acting

MARGRETH OLIN I was quite young when I decided I would become a storyteller. I was 8 or 9 years old. I come from the northwest coast of Norway, and lived there with my parents and my older sister and this uncle that always spent a lot of time with us. He wasn't married and he didn't have children. And one day my mother said we were going to take the bus with him to where my grandmother lived. When I was a little girl I thought I had the best of all uncles in the world. But I had never thought about the fact that when we were together we were always surrounded by close family. On this bus trip, it wasn't like this. It was strangers on the bus. And when people got on the bus or off the bus, everyone did the same thing: They turned and looked at my uncle as if they had never seen

Gondry

Murdoch

an uncle before. That's what I thought, because I had never seen people look at anyone that way. And he leaned over to me and he whispered, "You know, Margreth, I am not like anyone else." My uncle, he had Down syndrome. And on that trip — it was one hour — I was thinking if the people on the bus knew about him the way I did, they would have seen him differently. So I decided that I had to tell his story one day. So I got my education, and my first film, it's called *My Uncle* and it's about him.

FEO ALADAG That is an amazing story. For me, I always wanted to tell stories, and as a kid I thought it was by acting them. I studied acting and I worked as an actor for a while. I was offered certain parts and they were always "blond and beautiful" or "blond and ugly," "blond and blah-blah." I was missing out on something that was inside of me, and always hiding behind someone else when it came to execution. And then it all came together. I wanted to tell the story of *When We Leave* [2010] and I said, "I want to tell it exactly the way I wanted to tell it."

> *"Have you ever seen* Airport, *when everyone is dead and that random guy has to land the plane? I was like that guy who had to land the plane."*
>
> MURDOCH, on shooting his first film

What kind of directors are you? Have we got shouters at the table?

ALADAG Maybe Volker should answer that.

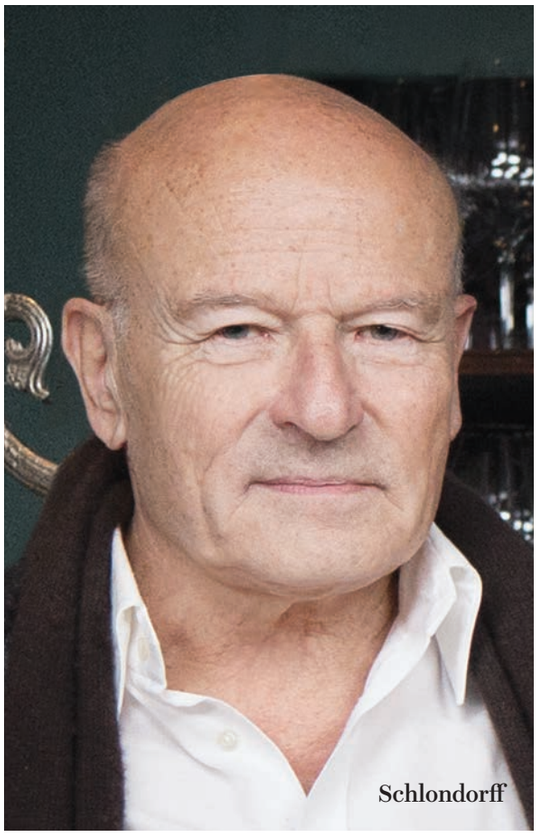
SCHLONDORFF Unfortunately I am famous for my choleric outbursts, which I try to control because it does such damage to my own working schedule and because you say things you may not mean and you hurt people. But I found out: The crew is not there to help the director. It's the other way around. You are the one who has to serve the others and then it all comes together. The gentle way is much better. I used to be very impatient when people murmured to me, "Couldn't we do this? Couldn't we do that?" But I have learned to listen because a lot of good ideas come out of that. It's the same with the actors. They should be free to try out everything and even make silly propositions. So I said [to myself]: Shut up, listen and don't shout.

Michel, how did it feel to give up control when making a film, *The Green Hornet*, in the studio system?

GONDRY In the case of *The Green Hornet*, the main obstruction was in the editing room, where my voice was very little compared to the voice of the producers, the voice of the actors, the voice of the studio executives. It was difficult to imprint something personal. At that stage it's not even about control, it's just about trying to express yourself. But that is an extreme example because going into this situation, you know you are not going to have much control. There is a certain prestige in doing it; you get paid a very good amount of money. And I always wanted to create this kind of blockbuster that reached a large audience. I am not sure I succeeded. I probably didn't. But it is hard to compare to my other movies that are more personal. Because [*Green Hornet*] was not meant to be personal.

You know, as a director, we don't direct every day, like the technicians.

Wenham


Schlondorff

Olin

We direct every two years, every four years. I think it was Bertrand Tavernier who said the first day of each movie felt like it was his first time. And the worst part is to have to pretend you know what you are doing and where you are going when actually you have no idea. But if you let it show, everyone will be worried and might try and take over. At least for me it is difficult to select the good idea from the bad. I think my starting point is they are all bad. I just feel more confident later. And I feel some are good.

SCHLONDORFF And that's where talent comes in. First you have to have success, then you get self-confident and then you get talent. Because talent, I think, is nothing else but to listen to your own instincts. That is very hard. It is some kind of intuition that either you have it or you don't. So follow it, and if you don't have it, you quit.

MURDOCH Can I ask if anyone is disillusioned by cinema or do you wake up feeling films are magic?

SCHLONDORFF Only when they are finished and they work with an audience. Then it's magic.

STEVENS There is a lot of heartbreak though.

MURDOCH Before I made my first film, I watched [Francois Truffaut's 1973] *La Nuit Americaine*. And this was my benchmark. I watched it all the time. Because it was about how to make a film. There's one point in the film where everything is going great and Truffaut announces, "Cinema is king!" And I always thought this is amazing. Do you feel that or does it come and go?

GONDRY I don't want to be offensive. But I feel this movie is a pure lie.

SCHLONDORFF It is a fairy tale.

GONDRY On this subject, there is this movie called *Living in Oblivion* [1995]. That is much more accurate, in my experience.

> ***First you have to have success, then you get self-confident and then you get talent. Because talent is nothing but listening to your own instincts.***"
>
> SCHLONDORFF

MURDOCH I watched that too. But I prefer the fairy tale. (*Laughs.*)

Would you direct again, Stuart?

MURDOCH Have you ever seen that film *Airport*, you know when everyone is dead and that random guy has to land the plane? Every day I went to the film set, and I was like that guy who had to land the plane. Pretty scary stuff, but I am still in love with the fairy tale, so maybe I am naive.

Do you think cinema, particularly documentaries, can be a tool to enact social change?

STEVENS In making our documentaries [*Mission Blue* and *Another World*], we wanted to use characters that would capture the imagination of an audience and not preach. If you have a message movie, don't talk about the message. You want to entertain and then let people discover the message that way.

THE FILMS

Feo Aladag
Inbetween Worlds
COMPETITION

Michel Gondry
Is the Man Who Is Tall Happy?
PANORAMA DOKUMENTE
BERLINALE JURY MEMBER

Stuart Murdoch
God Help the Girl
GENERATION 14PLUS

Margreth Olin
Cathedrals of Culture
BERLINALE SPECIAL

Volker Schlondorff
▲ *Diplomatie*
BERLINALE SPECIAL
Baal
BERLINALE SPECIAL

Fisher Stevens
Another World
PANORAMA DOKUMENTE
▲ *Mission Blue*
CULINARY CINEMA

David Wenham
The Turning
BERLINALE SPECIAL GALA

GONDRY A documentary like [Josh Fox's 2010] *GasLand* can really make a difference.

OLIN My last film, *Nowhere Home*, is about refugees coming from Afghanistan. Sometimes, I have to make movies to open people's eyes and see what we as a society are doing. Every person is a goal in themselves. But in Europe we are protecting borders more than we do people. Being a documentary filmmaker, I want to [create] political debate.

ALADAG I'm absolutely determined to take my [Afghanistan] film back to the country because I made it there and I want to show it there. I made it also to show a different Afghanistan and to show what can be done out of Afghanistan and show a different cultural level. But there are no real cinemas [there]. What really annoyed me making this movie was all those American films which have been made in Morocco or wherever, from some great directors, but none of them show certain parts of Afghanistan or a younger generation. They always show the shadow of the bad bearded Taliban.

GONDRY American movies keep reenforcing the idea that since the Cold War ended all the bad guys are not Russian anymore but are Arab.

As a director, what are you most afraid of?

STEVENS I had a nightmare that actually happened. I was directing three of my idols — Al Pacino, Christopher Walken and Alan Arkin — in a car at night [for 2012's *Stand Up Guys*]. It was late and they hated the scene. They say, "Fisher, get over here. This isn't working." I have three legends in a car and they're telling *me* to fix the scene. It was one of the worst moments of my entire life. I had to get these guys, who are all in their 70s, out of the car, it's a freezing cold night and it's late, and tell them how to fix it, reworking and reworking it. It was my nightmare. I said, "You guys have been doing movies for 40 years and we're going to fix this together." It worked out and they were all happy in the end.

GONDRY I had this dream. I was telling Dustin Hoffman, "I really loved you in *Dog Day Afternoon* [which stars Al Pacino, not Hoffman]." And I was really laughing at my own joke. I was so happy with it in my dream. Then I woke up. (*Laughs.*)

ALADAG I am scared that I put so many people in danger by making a film in Afghanistan and it doesn't reach across and connect with people's hearts and it doesn't communicate with audiences. I am scared shitless before I begin to shoot. The day before I went there, I thought, "How can I go there and actually do this?" I think if you stop having fear then it is probably time to pack up and leave the field because then you are cold and it's routine.

> ***"I had a nightmare that actually happened. I was directing Al Pacino, Christopher Walken and Alan Arkin and they hated the scene."***
> STEVENS

SCHLONDORFF I am in my 50th year directing and last night I had a dream. I am on the set and nothing is working and my lead actor doesn't know his lines, the sound is not working and the lighting is broken and the cameraman is taking hours to fix it. And I am standing in the middle, helpless, powerless, paralyzed. I've been having this nightmare, recurrently, for the past 50 years. And I had it last night. I woke up in a cold sweat. I once told it to Billy Wilder and he said, "I have a better story." He said the evening before he directed his first movie, he went to see [Ernst] Lubitsch and said, "Ernst, it is the day before my first movie and I am shitting in my pants." And Lubitsch answered: "Tomorrow is the 17th shooting day of my 72nd movie and I am shitting in my pants." THR

Stevens

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Something's giving Cesar Bordon (left) and Julian Zucker the creeps.

History of Fear

An affluent suburb of Buenos Aires is pushed to the brink of anxiety in this confident, semi-experimental debut

BY BOYD VAN HOEIJ

BENJAMIN NAISHTAT'S SEMI-EXPERIMENTAL DEBUT looks at a series of strange occurrences in the suburbs of Buenos Aires, Argentina. The film has no character development or clear narrative throughline to speak of, instead offering a succession of snippets from the lives of a loosely connected group of people who live or work in a neatly laid-out suburbia or in high-rises in the city center, supposedly tranquil and safe havens that slowly become undone by irrationally mounting tensions that are caused by such unexplained occurrences as a house alarm going off, an elevator getting stuck, a car being hit by mud thrown by an unseen assailant or electricity coming and going, occasionally leaving people in pitch-black darkness.

History of Fear is the kind of feature that requires an active investment from its audience, making this more suited to festivals than any type of commercial release, though art houses at the very upper end of the scale will find a small but very appreciative audience for this skillful and unsettling debut.

Though very much about generally human and thus group behavior, Naishtat's film arguably has two lead characters. The first is Camilo (Francisco Lumerman), an artist-journalist hybrid who likes to ask confrontational questions and record the answers for posterity, turning fleeting words into concrete evidence. Even during a dinner party with friends he likes to initiate straightforward-seeming verbal amusements that can be very revealing, such as when he asks his dinner companions two simple questions: What would you like to be and what would you like to have? Some simply refuse to answer, which is in and of itself very telling, while others clearly respond with what they assume will sound good to others. (These types of direct questions, disguised as an innocent game, directly involve the audience as well of course, as they did in the director's short, *El Juego*.)

The second lead of sorts is Pola (dancer Jonathan Da Rosa, making an impressively restrained acting debut), the son of a maid (Claudia Cantero) who, in an early scene, is asked to hold down the legs of a man (Daniel Leguizamon) who starts acting bizarrely in a fast-food queue — one of the film's first unexplained incidents.

Both Camilo and Pola appear in several of the scenes, and though the film makes no direct effort to elucidate what class they belong to or what their relationships are to the other characters, much can be inferred from what's simply put onscreen by production designer Marina Raggio, costume designer Jam Monti and gifted cinematographer Soledad Rodriguez.

Indeed, it pays to pay attention to the visuals from the opening, a prolonged helicopter shot that shows, from above, what the inhabitants of comfortable suburbia stand to lose — the more one has, the bigger the fear of losing it can be — as well as how each of the homes and gardens is, in essence, the same when seen from a distance. Naishtat then comes down to earth to demonstrate that this isn't only true of the inhabitants' architectural preferences and ideas on outdoor pool placement but equally applies to much more basic things such as instinctive reactions to perceived threats.

There are few reactions as unconscious and direct as the ones generated by unanticipated fear and the closely associated idea of self-preservation. The director turns his debut into a feature-length exploration of how terror of the unknown can become a destructive force, initially just inconveniencing people — like when someone decides not to open the door for a stranger — but gradually revealing that, in more extreme forms, reactions to things people don't understand or (sometimes literally) can't see have warped Argentinean society as a whole. Parallels to films such as Rodrigo Pla's more narrative-driven *The Zone* from Mexico suggest this is also true of other Latin American nations.

The sharp and intricate editing of Fernando Epstein and Andres Quaranta constantly straddles the line between normality and what the characters think might be abnormal and thus a possible cause for alarm. The cutting also helps build up a constant sense of unease, dread and foreboding, something reinforced by the score of Pedro Irusta and Maximiliano Silveira, with its dronelike sounds and frequent use of percussion. The intricate soundscape further completes the package as it suggests volumes about the places depicted (the suburbs sound like nature, the skyscraper apartments in the city are isolated in all senses of the world, perched atop a silent world).

Naishtat, who has made shorts and more experimental work such as the similarly titled 2011 Rotterdam premiere *Historia del Mal*, demonstrates a distinctive flair for not showing or explaining but simply suggesting — allowing audiences to imagine what's troubling the characters, making the film as much about the audience's own existential worries and fears as about those of the people onscreen.

The English title is indeed a direct translation of the original Spanish, *Historia del Miedo*, though *historia* also means story, tale or record, which all seem more adequate translations in the context of the film.

Competition
Cast *Jonathan Da Rosa, Tatiana Gimenez, Mirella Pascual, Claudia Cantero, Francisco Lumerman*
Writer-Director *Benjamin Naishtat // 79 minutes*

Cop Wu (left) faces off with crime boss Cheung.

That Demon Within

A cagey mixture of action and horror, with a standout performance from Daniel Wu, will get audiences into the theater BY DEBORAH YOUNG

The Hong Kong cops-and-robbers genre provides an inexhaustible source of inspiration for imaginative directors like Dante Lam, whose police actioner *That Demon Within* adds enough horror for a respectable Stephen King novel. He stamps his very personal mark of psychological complexity on the protag, shrilly portrayed by American-born HK star Daniel Wu (*The Last Supper*) in an eerie but highly effective performance. Nor does the Emperor production leave out any of the genre must-haves: shoot-outs in the middle of the street, car crashes, a bit of acrobatics and a beautiful policewoman boss worried about the daredevil hero. With all bases covered, including a bow in Berlin as a Panorama Special, the road is open for diversified audiences to enjoy the fun. It is being released in the U.S. and Canada on April 18, day and date with Hong Kong.

A seductive title sequence leads us into the den of the Demon King. Behind the old-fashioned rice paper devil masks are a criminal gang lead by Hon (Lam regular Nick Cheung from *The Beast Stalker* and *Stool Pigeon*), a cold-hearted villain whose own men hate him. Their latest heist has yielded $80 million in diamonds, which change hands so often in the course of the story it will take a sharp viewer to keep track of who has them at any given moment.

Watching the film, one has the feeling that the streets of Hong Kong are littered with dead pedestrians who had the bad luck to be passing by when the police open fire on the bad guys. Lam opens on one of these

The Rice Bomber

This polished but strangely distant drama has its heart in the right place BY ELIZABETH KERR

With every film renaissance comes the one piece that bucks the system, and in the case of Taiwan's recent surge it's Cho Li's *The Rice Bomber*, a polished and earnest quasi-docudrama based on the exploits of early-2000s agricultural activist Yang Rumen. With our collective food supply a hot topic in both consumer and documentary filmmaking (*Food Inc.*, *Farmageddon*, *The Harvest*), the subject matter ensures a fair amount of attention for Yang's admittedly compelling story. However, the sum doesn't quite add up to the parts, as *Rice Bomber* flits between tones and never generates the sense of urgency it should. That said, the film's combination of strong production values, timeliness and refreshing subject matter from Taiwan (no lovelorn teens with sexual identity crises or mopey existential angst) should give it a healthy life on the festival circuit.

Set during an economically turbulent period in Taiwan's recent history, the film follows a small-town boy from his life on a rice farm in the central Changhua region, to the military service that taught him the tricks of his trade and finally to full-blown agitator trying to bring attention to the plight of the island's farmers. As Taiwan enters the WTO and struggles beneath the burden of a newly globalized food supply, Yang Rumen (Huang Chien-Wei) transforms into an advocate for local farmers. Progressing from letters to the editor to petitions at government agencies and finally his renowned rice bombs, Rumen (in reality now a major proponent and practitioner of organic farming after seven years in prison) doesn't want to hurt anybody, one of the reasons his 17 bombs (which spray rice like buckshot) are planted in reasonably empty spots. That's not the case of his like-minded friend Troublemaker (Nikki Hsieh), a rich gangster's daughter who prefers more militant action.

One of the oddities of *Bomber* is the tonal shifting that frequently stalls its momentum — narrative, emotional or otherwise. Cho inserts news footage to mark important agricultural milestones that are less

Huang (left) and Hsieh fight the man.

high-adrenaline scenes that leave cars riddled with bullets and dead drivers. (And it's not the last; a similar scene on an overpass later on in the film is even more spectacular.)

In the heat of the shoot-out, Hon tries to escape on a motorbike but crashes. Seriously injured, he stumbles into a police station for help, so smeared with blood he's unrecognizable. There young cop Dave Wong (Wu) dutifully volunteers to donate blood to save his life. Obviously a mistake, at least in the eyes of Inspector Mok (Ka Wah Lam), who wants him dead. Hon escapes from the hospital without much ado and from that moment the chase is on.

Now for the psychological interest: Dave is a problem cop, a stubborn loner with anger management and paranoia issues and, we gradually discover, much more on his mind. It's not reassuring that Wu plays him like a nerdy Norman Bates, walking stiffly and bottling up his feelings. His new boss at work is Liz, a smart, pixie-like beauty (Christie Chen) who tries to stay professional but clearly has a soft spot for the guy. Concerned about his nightmares, violent impulses and some episodes of self-flagellation, she introduces him to her psychologist sister, who teases his considerable childhood traumas out under hypnosis.

Working on his own, Dave stays a step ahead of Inspector Mok as he closes in on the Demon King gang. Lam brings horror elements increasingly into play, particularly a recurrent image of people burning to death as human torches and a truly creepy scene in a funeral parlor. The final apocalypse is unapologetically over the top, but as great to watch as the last burst of fireworks.

Though the cops and robbers are so low-tech they seem retro (there's nary an electronic device in the story), Lam's filmmaking team deliver thrills on schedule with solid effects, crisp shooting and fast cutting.

Panorama Special
Cast *Daniel Wu, Nick Cheung, Christie Chen, Andy On, Liu Kai-chi, Lam Kar-wah, Lee Kwok-lun*
Director *Dante Lam*
112 minutes

elucidating than slightly jarring given the frequently sharp visuals and carefully tempered and understated scenes that precede them: long, quiet moments of meditation with his brother Cai (Michael Chang), the eerie calm of the military base where Rumen learns both bomb-building and how to deal with his own simmering rage, otherworldly swims in the sea. In addition, Cho slips into the fantastical when Rumen chats with an imaginary friend, and raises questions as to whether Troublemaker is even real. Cap that off with a few too many montage sequences set to Peyman Yazdanian's borderline bombastic score and *Bomber*'s oddly disconnected, unengaging vibe that makes connecting to the situation more cerebral than visceral, and the result is an ambitious statement film that clears its throat and taps you on the shoulder rather than hollers. With the exception of the music, of course.

Regardless of the film's minor flaws, *The Rice Bomber* is producer Cho's most accomplished film as a director, and she clearly is committed to the material. And fortunately cinematographer Cho Yong-Kyou comes to the rescue on more than one occasion, capturing the Taiwanese countryside with its bright blue sky and vibrant green fields in a classically unfussy way, making the contrasting dusty brown of the same fields (at the behest of new government policy) quietly heartbreaking — which is the only time the film really gets to hollering.

Panorama
Director *Cho Li*
Cast *Huang Chien-Wei, Nikki Hsieh, Michael Chang*
117 minutes

Superegos

Freudian neurosis meets postwar German guilt in this ambitious but uneven comedy from writer-director Benjamin Heisenberg BY STEPHEN DALTON

Psychoanalyst Wilms (left) and con man Friedrich are an unlikely pairing.

The ghost of Sigmund Freud hovers just out of shot throughout this sunny, lightweight farce about an elderly psychotherapist forging an uneasy friendship with a street-smart criminal. The young writer-director Benjamin Heisenberg is back at the Berlinale four years after earning rave reviews here for his tense true-story crime thriller *The Robber*. But his sideways shift into comedy is less sure-footed, and this German-Austrian-Swiss co-production feels unlikely to travel beyond German-speaking countries. This may be purely because local humor rarely translates well, but Heisenberg's uncertainty with the material also is a factor.

Nick (Georg Friedrich) is a con man who makes a living from buying, selling and stealing rare books. Gatecrashing a lakeside villa where he hopes to lie low from the gangsters he owes money to, Nick instead becomes a kind of caretaker companion for Curt (Andre Wilms), a well-known veteran psychoanalyst living with a heavy burden of guilt over his youthful success during the Nazi era.

Nick sees Curt as a meal ticket, while the old man embraces his anarchic new friend as a suitable case for treatment. In theory, Heisenberg has the ingredients here for a sparky odd-couple two-hander. Friedrich is a seasoned Austrian stage veteran who has worked with Michael Haneke and Ulrich Seidl, while the French-born Wilms has five decades of solid screen credits including films by Aki Kaurismaki, Patrice Leconte and Francois Ozon.

Their comic chemistry should yield rich material, especially when Nick begins to mirror Curt's neuroses, while the old man feels his crumbling mental faculties revitalized by having such a complex case to study. With its colorful backdrop of mountains and lakes, deluxe villas and hot air balloons, *Superegos* is easy on the eye.

Unfortunately, it is also hobbled by uneven shifts of tone, lurching off into superfluous subplots and labored slapstick. The gangsters pursuing Nick are cartoonish caricatures with no hint of menace. An extended sequence in which Curt buries Nick up to his neck in mud for therapeutic reasons becomes genuinely disturbing, and arguably belongs in a much darker film.

There are nods to Woody Allen here in the shrink-culture plot, plain credits and exuberant retro-jazz soundtrack, but with little of primetime Woody's zingy wit. Admirably ambitious, but less than the sum of its parts, *Superegos* will not go down in history as one of Heisenberg's more memorable movies. More like a Freudian slip.

Panorama Special
Cast *Georg Friedrich, Andre Wilms, Bettina Stucky, Susanne Wolff*
Director *Benjamin Heisenberg // 94 minutes*

Guo (left) and Zhang are blind lovers.

Blind Massage

A series of moving human dramas unfold in a Chinese massage institute run by the blind BY DEBORAH YOUNG

Love among the sightless is the engrossing, at times moving, dramatic thread that links multiple relationships in *Blind Massage*, one of the most convincing films made by Chinese director Lou Ye in recent years. Putting aside the torrid sexual and emotional dramas of recent films like the 2011 *Love and Bruises* shot in Paris and his infidelity drama *Mystery*, he describes love stories as plain human affairs full of hope and frustration, poetry and banality, straddling an interesting middle ground between realism and imagination. Lou's auteur reputation should help this Wild Bunch title to find its way to sensitive audiences.

Based on Bi Feiyu's novel, the film presents overlapping relationships with neither the glamorous fatality of glossy Hong Kong costumers nor the prurient interest of steamy erotica. Though there are passionate scenes of coupling, they are integral to the lives of characters we come to know and care about. This isn't the flashiest of films, but it has sincerity and feeling that connects to audiences.

An offscreen narrator first introduces Xiao Ma (Huang Xuan), who lost his sight as a baby in a traffic accident that killed his mother. As a teenager he explodes one day and tries to cut his own throat, before being sent to a school for the blind where he learns Braille and the art of massage.

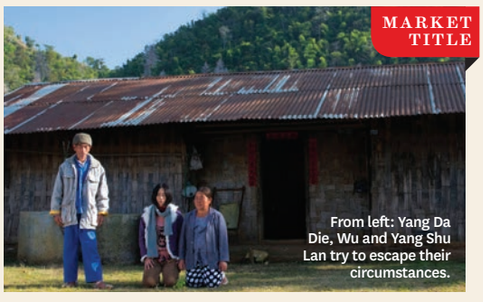
It is the golden age of "blind massage," the narrator informs us, and Xiao Ma ends up in a cheerful institute where the personnel lives and works, run like a big family by its blind director Sha Fuming (Qin Hao who worked on Ye's *Mystery* and gay drama *Spring Fever*). He soon is joined by his old friend Dr. Wang (Guo Xiaodong from *A Summer Palace* and *Reign of Assassins*), who brings with him his also nearly sightless fiancee Kong (Zhang Lei). The girl becomes an obsession for restless Xiao Ma, until the boy is taken to a different sort of massage parlor down the street. In this establishment he is smitten by the young prostitute Mann (Huang Lu). Fuming, on the other hand, falls hard for the attractive Du Hong (Mei Ting), a masseuse who drives him mad. He touches

Ice Poison

Grim economic and social realities emerge in this engaging portrait of modern Burma BY ELIZABETH KERR

With *Poor Folk* and *Return to Burma*, Burmese-Taiwanese filmmaker Midi Z developed a signature style for his intimate portraits of modern Burmese life. The director's latest is a similar look at the poverty, drug abuse and aimlessness that plague his homeland. *Ice Poison* shows a marked maturation of Midi Z as a filmmaker, though he still lets his hallmark long shots get the better of the material from time to time. Festivals that showed interest in his earlier features are sure to repeat that interest here, and limited art house release, particularly in Asia, isn't out of the question.

Set in a small town best known for its opium crop, the story such as it is begins with a young vegetable farmer (Wang Shin-Hong)



From left: Yang Da Die, Wu and Yang Shu Lan try to escape their circumstances.

and his father (Zhou Cai Chang) discussing the state of the agricultural trade they've relied on their whole lives. With industrial farming bearing down on them, they sort through their options for the coming season. It's a typical Midi Z segment, with a still camera and naturalistic performances as the two men talk about seeking help from friends and family in the city. Their last hope is Uncle Wang, who takes the father's prized cow as down payment for a motorbike that the son — called the Driver — can use as a taxi. If no more money is forthcoming, the cow will be sold to the slaughterhouse.

To this point *Ice Poison* is a measured (some would say slow) and somewhat rambling narrative that deftly illustrates this side of Burma right now. The film really starts to take shape when the Driver finally picks up a fare: Sanmei (Wu Ke-Xi), a local woman living in China back in town to bury her grandfather. Sanmei ropes the Driver into helping her out as a courier for her cousin, who deals a meth-like drug called ice.

One of *Ice Poison*'s greatest strengths is its dispassionate tone; Midi Z's screenplay never condemns or condones the Driver and Sanmei's decisions. Wu and Wang are both wholly believable as young people frustrated with what they see as a lack of a future.

Panorama
Cast *Wu Ke-Xi, Wang Shin-Hong, Zhou Cai Chang*
Writer-Director *Midi Z // 94 minutes*

her face and licks his fingers in despair at not being able to see her beauty.

These and other relationships are woven tightly together; their final outcomes are unforeseen. With the novel and Ma Yingli's screenplay providing the framework, Lou is free to use his camera to describe the world of the blind to sighted viewers. The opening credits are read out loud by the narrator, which is already a little unsettling.

Sets are uniformly busy, cramped spaces which give the feeling of living in a fish tank or a turtle bowl. The massage institute's glass doors that Fuming keeps bumping into are echoed in the glass storefront of the brothel, where girls beckon customers inside. Cinematographer Zeng Jian's intimate camera avoids clear images in favor of darting, expressionistic impressions, which is probably as close as a film can come to the experience of blindness. Johan Johannsson's varied score firmly directs the mood.

Competition
Cast *Guo Xiaodong, Qin Hao, Zhang Lei, Mei Ting, Huang Xuan, Huang Lu, Jiang Dan, Huang Junjun, Mu Huaipeng, Wang Zhihua*
Director *Lou Ye*
117 minutes

DIRECTOR Q&A

Lou Ye

The controversial auteur discusses his highs and lows, fighting censorship and China's 'transitional phase' By Clifford Coonan

Lou Ye has sailed close to the wind throughout his career, regularly coming up against official disapproval for his gritty depictions of contemporary China. His decision to bring his 2006 drama *Summer Palace* to Cannes without government permission earned him a five-year ban from filmmaking. In fact, most of his work has been banned in his home country, but his Berlin competition entry *Blind Massage* has been approved for the China market. Lou spoke to *The Hollywood Reporter* about the challenges facing filmmakers in China and his wish for the development of the world's second-biggest film market.

What have been the low points and high points of your career?
The lowest point was without doubt that time eight years ago when I was banned from making movies for five years. I worried that I would never make a movie again. But you could also describe that period as a high point, because as a director, to have made a great film, is a big achievement.

Do you prefer big movies or small movies?
After dealing with a big theme in my last film [2012's *Mystery*], I became more interested in details, in a certain smaller perspective. But there are no fixed rules. Maybe I'll go for a big theme in the next movie. After I do a big, historical subject, I usually find I want to get into smaller details. It's the same amount of preparation, regardless of the story. *Summer Palace* and *Blind Massage* both took a year to edit.

Do you feel pressure to make commercial films?
I'm interested in history, in story and in art. But I'm also interested in the market. The film market in China is great right now; it's growing all the time and ordinary people are going to the cinema. That's healthy and a great sign, even if some of those films are not particularly well-made and look a bit rough, but still get great box office. We shouldn't attack these films because we are in a transition phase.

How has the situation developed in China in the eight years since *Summer Palace* was released?
In my personal opinion, things have gotten better. It's easier to get money. From a technical perspective, there has been a big improvement. The films are better. But there are some things that haven't improved, such as censorship or ideological restrictions. In the last three to five years, you can see that the film bureaucracy has developed at a much slower pace than the market and the film audience. The filmmakers and the authorities recognize this. The bureaucracy could ask us filmmakers, "Give us time." And I would say: Of course, but how long do you need? How long must we wait for improvement in censorship, or for the introduction of a classification system? When will we get a fair regulatory system, one that compares with Hollywood? THR

Scouting for Zebras

A Belgian sports agent scouts African talent in this darkly comic postcolonial satire with real heart BY JORDAN MINTZER

A down-and-dirty dramedy that's as politically incorrect as it is honest, *Scouting for Zebras* follows the travails of a waning sports agent trying to turn a young African player into the next big thing in Belgian soccer.

Budding soccer star Zinga (left) is recruited by Poelvoorde.

Starring Benoit Poelvoorde in a role that allows his comic talents to shine while revealing something deeper at the core, this unwieldy but poignant third feature from writer-director Benoit Mariage will reach theaters in Francophone markets, though it deserves wider play.

The film details the maneuverings of Jose (Poelvoorde), a soccer expert specializing in scouting Third World talents and making them stars in Europe. Jose hasn't struck gold in a while and is hoping that this latest sejour in Abidjan will be worth his while. He quickly sees a pipe dream in talented street kid Yaya (Marc Zinga).

Portraying a ruthless world where Africans are exploited for their athletic or sexual abilities by money-grubbing Westerners, Mariage never shies away from the realities of postcolonial countries like the Ivory Coast, whose population continues to live in poverty while a select few get anointed abroad. And while Jose seems to have a hand in making that happen, he's hardly shown to be a martyr, banking off his foreigner's status to live like a kingpin and harnessing Yaya's talents for his own gain.

When agent and player arrive in Belgium so the latter can try out for a major club (nicknamed "The Zebras" for their striped jerseys), things get messy, with Yaya suffering setbacks that may keep him from the starting lineup.

The film never succumbs to pure despair, thanks to Poelvoorde's generous turn as a man who's selfish but sometimes capable of immense empathy. He's also quite hilarious, sparing few punches.

Shot with a gritty handheld style by Dardennes Bros. regular Benoit Dervaux, *Zebras* is at once merry and morose, using pointed humor to describe a situation that's far from fair, but not without its small share of humanity.

Sales *Films Distribution*
Cast *Benoit Poelvoorde, Marc Zinga, Tatiana Rojo*
Director *Benoit Mariage*
80 minutes

8 Decades of *The Hollywood Reporter*

The most glamorous and memorable moments from a storied history

Riefenstahl with cameraman Walter Frentz during the 1936 shooting of *Olympia*, which won the Mussolini Cup for best foreign film at the 1938 Venice film fest.

August 26-28

James Ulmer

In Transit

More fuehrer 'furor'; Riefenstahl may return

MONTREAL — After more than 50 years, Leni Riefenstahl is still ruffling political feathers. According to our Berlin burrower, Dr. Ron Holloway, the legendary Nazi-era director ("Triumph of the Will"), now 91 years young, has been asked by director Volker Schlondorff ("The Tin Drum") to be the camerawoman on his next feature project, "Silberpfeile" (The Silver Arrow). Holloway says Schlondorff's idea "raised a furor" in Berlin this week when he suggested Riefenstahl for his film, which chronicles the famed competition between Mercedes-Ben and Auto-Union in the 1930s to manufacture the world's fastest racing car. Seems that memories of Riefenstahl as a Hitler buddy and top propaganda lenser for the Nazis die hard. But Schlondorff insists that in order to capture the look and feel of the times — when German racing cars sped across the world's headlines — "I will need to use the camera style and optics of the 1930s" — hence hiring Riefenstahl. No word yet whether Riefenstahl has said "ja" to the project.

Volker Schlondorff insists that in order to capture the look and feel of the times, "I will need to use the camera style and optics of the 1930s."

Incidentally, Avus, where the 1934 race took place, is now part of the German Autobahn expressway between Berlin and Potsdam, which is only a hop away from the Babelsberg Studios where Schlondorff is business manager and where the film will be shot . . Schl[illegible]orff h[illegible] fondnes[illegible]

For Hitler, Leni Riefenstahl broke new cinematic ground

LENI RIEFENSTAHL sealed her filmmaking fate when she agreed to Hitler's personal request to make *Triumph of the Will*, the 1935 documentary on the Nazi Party Congress. He gave the 32-year-old carte blanche: a 172-person staff; 16 teams operating 30 cameras; ditches dug near the speaker's platform to get dramatic camera angles. There'd never been a film like it. *Olympia*, her documentary on the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin, was equally groundbreaking. Riefenstahl used slow motion and underwater shots to take sports cinematography to a new level. But when she came to Hollywood in 1938 (she stayed in a Beverly Hills Hotel bungalow) to promote *Olympia*, the studios wouldn't even allow her on the lot. In the '90s, Paul Verhoeven tried to make a film about Riefenstahl starring Sharon Stone. Jodie Foster wanted to star in one herself but knew it would be controversial, saying: "I'm going to catch some shit on that one." Both projects disappeared. After the war, Riefenstahl was detained by the Allies; subjected to four "denazification" proceedings; and eventually declared a "mitlaufer" (Nazi sympathizer) but set free. Asked in 1974 if, knowing what she now knew, she would make *Triumph* again, Riefenstahl said: "No, no, no. I suffer too much. ... I never would make it again." She died in 2003 at age 101, survived by her 59-year-old cameraman partner, Horst Kettner, born six years after *Olympia* was released. — BILL HIGGINS

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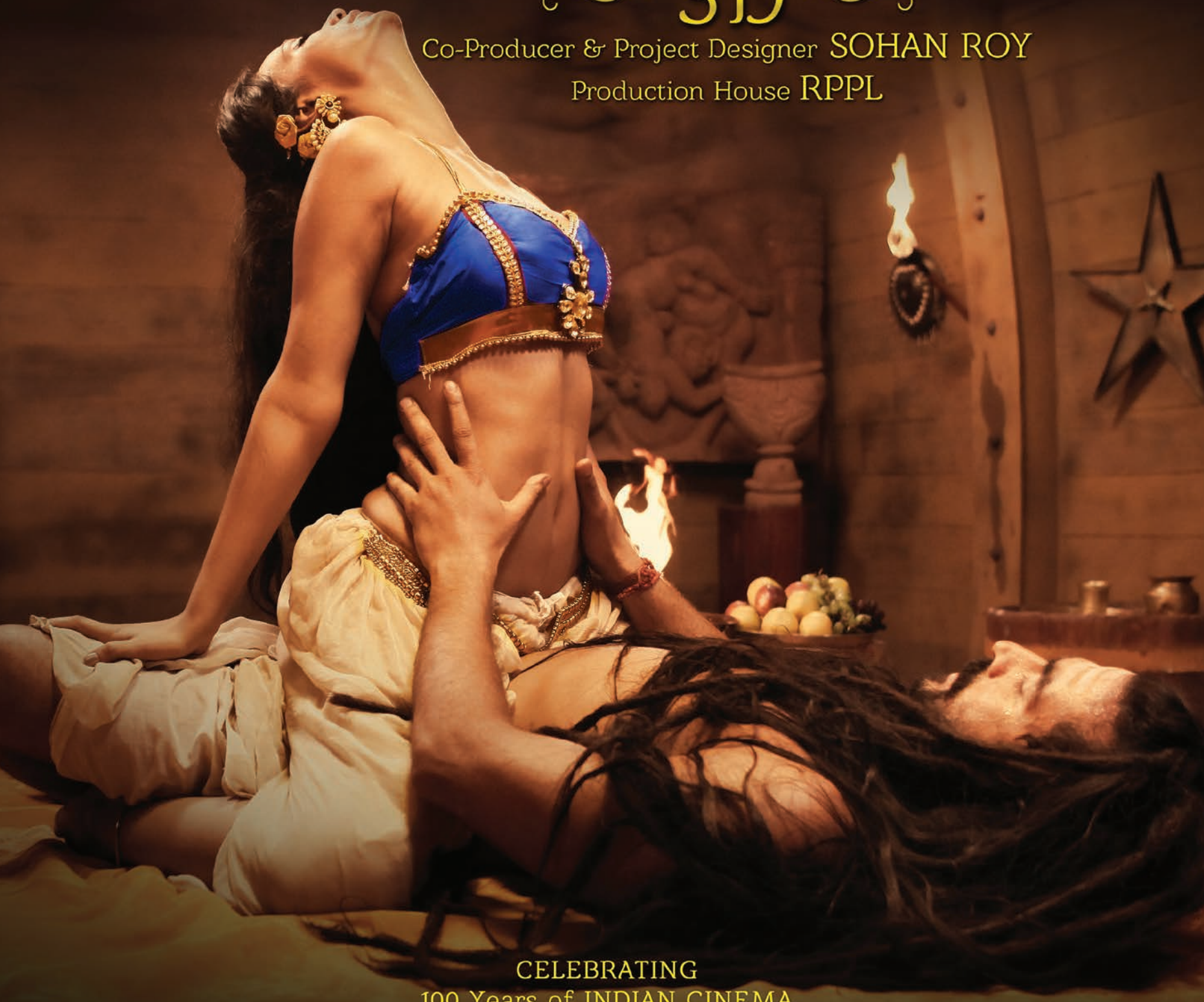

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